

2040
ARTICLES OF FAITH,
AND
PLAN OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT,
COMPOSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CHURCHES
BELIEVING IN THE
SALVATION OF ALL MEN,

MET IN PHILADELPHIA,
ON THE 25th OF MAY, 1790. ^K

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
SUNDRY RECOMMENDATIONS,
AND A
CIRCULAR LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES,
BELIEVING THE SAME DOCTRINE.

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M,DCC,XC.



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INTRODUCTION.

UNDER a deep sense of the unchangeable, and universal love of God to mankind in a Redeemer, and in humble thankfulness to his kind providence in permitting us to assemble and deliberate, agreeably to the dictates of our consciences, without fear of civil or ecclesiastical power; **WE**, the representatives of sundry Societies in the United States, believing in the Salvation of all Men, convened on the 25th of May, 1790, in the city of Philadelphia, by an invitation from the brethren in the said city holding the same doctrine, and having implored the direction and blessing of God upon our endeavours to extend the knowledge of his Name, have adopted the following Articles and Plan of Church Government.

C H A P.

C H A P. I.

ARTICLES OF FAITH.

SECT. 1. *Of the HOLY SCRIPTURES.*

WE believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to contain a revelation of the perfections and will of God, and the rule of faith and practice.

SECT. 2. *Of the SUPREME BEING.*

WE believe in ONE GOD, infinite in all his perfections, and that these perfections are all modifications of infinite, adorable, incomprehensible, and unchangeable LOVE.

SECT. 3. *Of the MEDIATOR.*

WE believe that there is ONE MEDIATOR between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; who, by giving himself a ransom for all, hath redeemed them to God by his blood; and who, by the merit of his death, and the efficacy of his Spirit, will finally restore the whole human race to happiness.

SECT. 4. *Of the HOLY GHOST.*

WE believe in the HOLY GHOST, whose office it is to make known to Sinners the truth of their Salvation, through the medium of the Holy Scriptures,
and

and to reconcile the hearts of the children of men to God, and thereby to dispose them to genuine holiness.

SECT. 5. *Of GOOD WORKS.*

WE believe in the obligation of the moral law as the rule of life; and we hold, that the love of God manifested to man in a Redeemer, is the best means of producing obedience to that law, and promoting a holy, active, and useful life.

C H A P. II.

PLAN OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

SECT. I. *Of a CHURCH.*

WE conceive a Church to consist of a number of Believers, united by covenant, for the purposes of maintaining the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, ordaining Officers, preserving Order and Peace among its Members, and relieving the Poor.—Each Church possesses within itself all the powers of self-government.

SECT. 2. *Of the OFFICERS of a CHURCH.*

THE Officers of a Church are two, *viz.* BISHOPS and DEACONS. The terms Bishop, Elder, Minister, Pastor, and Teacher, we conceive to be the same, and intended only to express the different capacities
in

in which the same Officer is called to act. For the duty of Bishops we refer to the 28th chapter of Matthew, and the 19th and 20th verses; and for the qualifications and duty of both Bishops and Deacons, we refer to the 3d and 4th chapters of the first epistle to Timothy.

SECT. 3. *Of the CALL and ORDINATION of the OFFICERS of a CHURCH.*

SUCH persons as possess those qualifications and gifts, which the Holy Scriptures prescribe for a Bishop, and who wish to devote themselves to God in the ministry, shall be invited to preach before the members of the Church; and if after trial, they shall appear to be under the influence of the spirit of the Gospel, and to possess such endowments as are requisite for the profitable exercise of the duty of a Bishop or Minister, the Church shall solemnly set apart and ordain such persons; and a certificate of such appointment shall be to them a sufficient ordination to preach the Gospel, and to administer such Ordinances herein after-mentioned, as to them may seem proper, wherever they may be called by Divine Providence.

And as the great design of forms in ordaining Ministers, is to prevent weak, and immoral persons from exercising the ministerial office, we admit Ordination by any Church in which such forms have been observed, to be valid, and when persons so Ordained, shall apply to become members of any of our Churches, they shall (if otherwise qualified) be admitted not only as Members, but Ministers also.

DEACONS

DEACONS shall be chosen by the members of the Church, and ordained in like manner as Bishops or Ministers. Their business (besides receiving and applying the pious and charitable contributions of the Church, for the support of the labourers in the Gospel, and the relief of the poor), shall be to attend to the secular affairs of the Church, to keep an exact register of all the persons who shall be born, baptized, admitted to communion, married, or who shall remove, or die, belonging to the Society; also, an account of the admission and dismissal of members, and of all the business of the Church.

SECT. 4. *Of DIVINE WORSHIP.*

EACH Church shall meet statedly one day in seven, for the worship of God, and the preaching of the Gospel. And as we have no rules laid down in the word of God to direct us in our choice of a mode or form of public worship, it is recommended to each Church to use such modes or forms of prayer, and to sing such psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, as to them shall appear most agreeable to the word of God, or best suited to promote order, and spiritual edification.

SECT. 5. *Of ORDINANCES.*

WHEREAS a great diversity of opinions has prevailed in all ages of the Church upon the subjects of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; as also upon the subjects of Confirmation, the Washing of Feet, Love Feasts, and the anointing the Sick with oil, &c. and as this diversity of opinions has often been the means of dividing Christians, who were united by the same spirit

rit in more essential articles, we agree to admit all such persons who hold the articles of our faith, and maintain good works, into membership, whatever their opinions may be as to the nature—form—or obligations of any or all of the above named ordinances. If it shall so happen that an application shall be made to a Minister to perform any of the said ordinances, who does not believe in the present obligations of Christians to submit to them; or if he shall be applied to to perform them at a *time*, or in a *way* that is contrary to his conscience, in such case a neighbouring Minister, who shall hold like principles respecting the ordinance or ordinances required by any member, shall be invited to perform them; or if it be thought more expedient, each Church may appoint or ordain one of their own members to administer the ordinances in such way as to each Church may seem proper.

SECT. 6. *Of the ADMISSION and EXCLUSION of MEMBERS.*

ALL persons who subscribe our articles of faith, and lead sober and moral lives, shall be considered as members of a Church. A departure from those articles, or an immoral life, shall subject a member to private admonition by the Minister, or a brother member only, according to Matth. xviii. 18, 21. and Luke xvii. 3, and 4. If what we conceive to be error, or if what all Christian Churches agree to be vice, is persisted in, the offending member shall be admonished a second time by any two or three members of the Church. If after these steps, he continue disobedient, his name shall be publicly erased from the

the list of members, but he shall be exhorted at the same time to attend public worship, and the preaching of the Gospel; and he shall be restored in love, after he exhibits such signs of a return to his former faith or practice, as shall be deemed satisfactory to the Church.

SECT. 7. *Of MARRIAGE.*

MARRIAGES are to be performed in such way as the laws of particular States have made necessary; Ministers of the Gospel belonging to our Church are at liberty to celebrate this ordinance.

SECT. 8. *Of the INSTRUCTION of CHILDREN.*

WE believe it to be the duty of all parents to instruct their children in the principles of the Gospel, as the best means to inspire them with the love of virtue, and to promote in them good manners, and habits of industry and sobriety. As a necessary introduction to the knowledge of the Gospel, we recommend the institution of a school, or schools, to be under the direction of every Church; in which shall be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and psalmody. We recommend further, that provision be made for instructing poor children in the said schools gratis. As the fullest discovery of the perfections and will of God, and of the whole duty of man, is contained in the BIBLE, we wish that Divine Book to be read by the youth of our Churches as early and frequently as possible; and that they should be instructed therein at stated meetings appointed for that purpose.

SECT.

SEC. 9. *Of the COMMUNION of CHURCHES.*

THE Churches shall convene together for the purposes of more effectually spreading the Gospel, and of assisting, and edifying each other. A Convention of the Churches shall be held annually by deputies or messengers to enquire into, and report the state of each Church, respecting the admission of members, and the progress of the Gospel; to consult and act for the common benefit of all the Churches; and to send forth Ministers to propagate the Gospel in places where it has not been regularly preached, and thereby to form and establish new Churches.—No Acts of this Convention shall be supposed to invade the freedom or sovereignty of a particular Church. Each Church reserves to itself full and exclusive power to judge of all matters relating to faith or practice (as established by our Articles) among its own members.—All the general Acts of the Convention, which relate to the interests of particular churches, shall be issued only by way of advice, or recommendation.

C H A P. III.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

SECT. I. *Of WAR.*

ALTHOUGH a defensive war may be considered lawful, yet we believe there is a time coming, when the light and universal love of the Gospel, shall put an end to all wars. We recommend, therefore,

therefore, to all the Churches in our Communion, to cultivate the spirit of peace, and brotherly love, which shall lead them to consider all mankind as brethren; and to strive to spread among them the knowledge of their common Saviour and Redeemer, who came into the world, "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

SECT. 2. *Of going to LAW.*

WE hold it unbecoming for Christians, who are members of the same Church, to appeal to Courts of Law for the settlement of disputes. Such appeals too often ingender malice, beget idleness, and produce a waste of property. They are, therefore, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. In disputes of all kinds, and with all persons, we recommend appeals to Arbitrators appointed by both parties, where it is practicable, in preference to Courts of Law.

SECT. 3. *Of holding SLAVES.*

WE believe it to be inconsistent with the union of the human race in a common Saviour, and the obligations to mutual and universal love, which flow from that union, to hold any part of our fellow-creatures in bondage. We therefore recommend a total refraining from the African trade, and the adoption of prudent measures for the gradual abolition of the slavery of the negroes in our country, and for the instruction and education of their children in English literature, and in the principles of the Gospel.

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SECT. 4. *Of OATHS.*

WE recommend it to all the members of our Churches to enquire, whether Oaths do not lessen the frequency of truth in common life—whether they do not encrease profane swearing—whether they are not contrary to the commands of our Saviour, and the apostle James; and lastly, whether they do not lessen the dignity of the Christian name, by obliging professors of Christianity to yield to a suspicion of being capable of declaring a falsehood. And as we are indulged by the Laws of all our States, with the privilege of giving testimony by simple affirmation, we submit it to the consciences of our members, whether that mode of declaring the truth, should not be preferred to any other.

SECT. 5. *Of SUBMISSION to GOVERNMENT.*

WE recommend to all the members of our Churches a peaceful submission to the higher powers, not for wrath, but for conscience sake, &c. We enjoin, in a particular manner, a regard to truth, and justice, in the payment of such duties or taxes, as shall be required by our rulers, for the maintainance of order, and the support of government.

Signed by order, and in behalf
of the Convention, by

WILLIAM WORTH, MODERATOR.

ATTEST. ARTIS SEAGREAVE, Clerk.

June 8th. 1790.

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CIRCULAR LETTER.

THE Elders and Brethren, in the belief of the Universal Salvation of all men, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ, met in Convention in Philadelphia, on the 25th of May, and continued by adjournment, until the 8th of June, 1790.

To the Elders and Brethren in the same Belief throughout the United States of America, we wish Health, Peace, and Happiness.

Beloved in our Common Lord and Saviour,

WE herewith send you a copy of the Articles of Faith, and Plan of Church Government, which we have, with uncommon love and unanimity, agreed upon in Convention. The Articles are few, but they contain the essentials of the Gospel. We thought it improper to require an assent to opinions that are merely speculative, or to introduce *words*, in expressing the articles of our belief, which have been the cause of unchristian controversies. The plan of Church Government is nearly that of the Congregational Church. We conceive it to be most friendly to Christian Liberty, and most agreeable to the Word of God. We have submitted several matters of consequence to your consideration, under the title of 'RECOMMENDATIONS.' They form as yet no part of our system of Faith or Practice as a Church; but we hope the time is not very distant, when the progressive light of the Gospel shall banish all the error and vice, which are the sources of the present disorders and miseries of human society.

We

We rejoice in the progress of the long imprisoned truth of God's Universal Love to Mankind; and that he hath, in his infinite goodness, raised up so many faithful witnesses of late years, to declare it in many parts of our country. We hope and pray that this glorious truth may continue to prevail against anti-christian darkness and error; and that all who profess to believe it, may be led by the inward manifestation of God's love, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and thereby to confute the objections that are urged against us, by those who deny the infinite extent of the mercy and power of God.

We request that such of you as are formed into Churches, would send deputies or messengers to meet in the Convention to be held in Philadelphia on the 25th of next May; and that such of you as are not formed into Churches, would associate for that purpose, and concur in sending Representatives to the Convention.

Signed by order, and in behalf
of the Convention, by

WILLIAM WORTH, MODERATOR.

ATTEST. ARTIS SEAGREAVE, Clerk.



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